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Popularity of 'Citizens Band' Causes Big Jams on Air Lanes

By WARD CANNEL

Washington, D. C.—NEA—Kindly fasten your seat belts. Here we go again—up into the mind of the American consumer and the strange case of the Citizens Band.

Now, if this epidemic hasn't hit your neighborhood and you don't know about it yet, Citizens Band (or CB) is a number of radio broadcasting frequencies opened up for public use little more than a year ago by the federal communications commission. Under the law any citizen over 18 can have his own radio station on this band merely by buying the necessary equipment and getting an FCC license—available on request.

No ham radio requirements. No Morse code to memorize or electronics to learn. No muss, no fuss, no tedious hours of self-improvement. On the other hand, no distance, either. CB usually can reach no more than 10 or 15 miles.

Farmers Use Them

Its obvious uses: Businesses keeping contact with their outside operations, farmers keeping in touch with field hands, construction men on big or high jobs, truckers, taxi fleets, re-pairmen and so forth.

From its first moment of life, however, CB was bigger than everything put together. Equipment manufacturers claim an average of 25,000 sets (from about \$57.50 to \$189) selling per month. The FCC reports 7,000 license applications per month and they're six weeks behind in the processing. Electronics mail order catalogs list page after page of CB kits and ready made sets.

Who's buying them?

"A lot of businessmen of course," a spokesman for one concern said, "but a lot more who are plain citizens."

Fine for Boats, Cars

"How do I know why? If there was a why, the radio business would shrink to practically nothing. It's fun. It's kicks. That's why. I've got one at home and I've reached some people five blocks away. It's terrific."

This is the word from editors



"Power steering is what a man has when he lets God guide his life."

the kind you can put in your pocket and broadcast for a couple of miles from wherever you are.

"That ought to jam the airways real good."

at the careful Electronics World magazine: "It's wonderful for boat owners talking to their wives, or for highway information on tourist accommodations or road help. Private auto units are very popular."

Hence, any afternoon at rush hour, you can tune to the CB channels on Long Island and hear what sounds like all the young executives in the world shouting to each other to get off the air so they can tell their wives that they'll be home in 20 minutes—and, of course, find out what the weather's like.

'It Will Get Worse'

In addition to motorists and boat owners, equipment salesmen say, other big purchasers are: (1) mothers who want their sons to become engineers, (2) people who get home from work too early for the good TV shows, and (3) people who think they have found a way to beat the phone company.

It all adds up to a boom in manufacturing and selling and 23 channels that are fast becoming overcrowded.

"It's going to get worse before it gets better," one big electronics mail order company official reports. "New lightweight transistorized sets are coming out now for CB use—